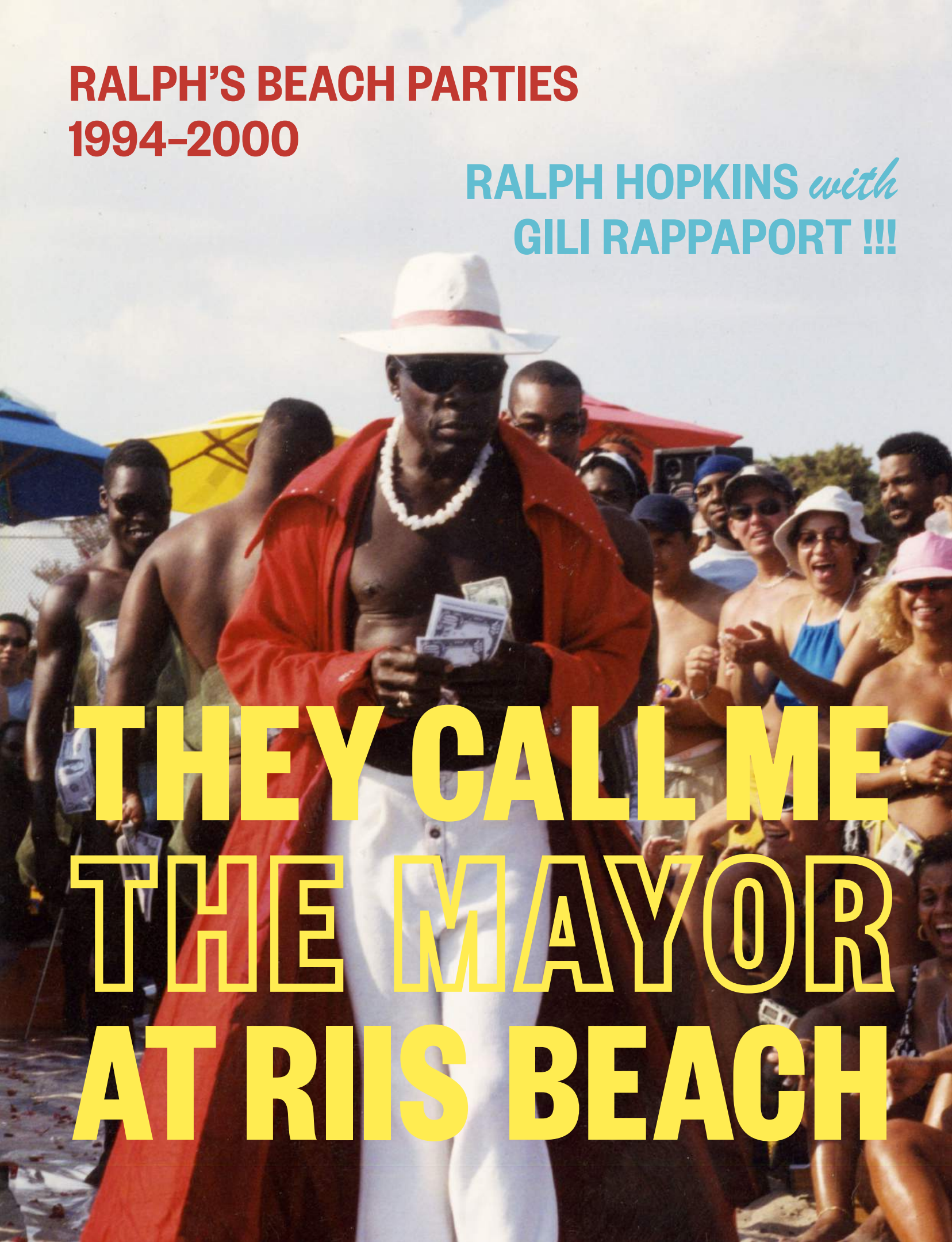
RALPH'S BEACH PARTIES
1994–2000

RALPH HOPKINS *with*
GILI RAPPAPORT !!!



THEY CALL ME THE MAYOR AT RIIS BEACH

RALPH'S BEACH PARTIES
1994–2000

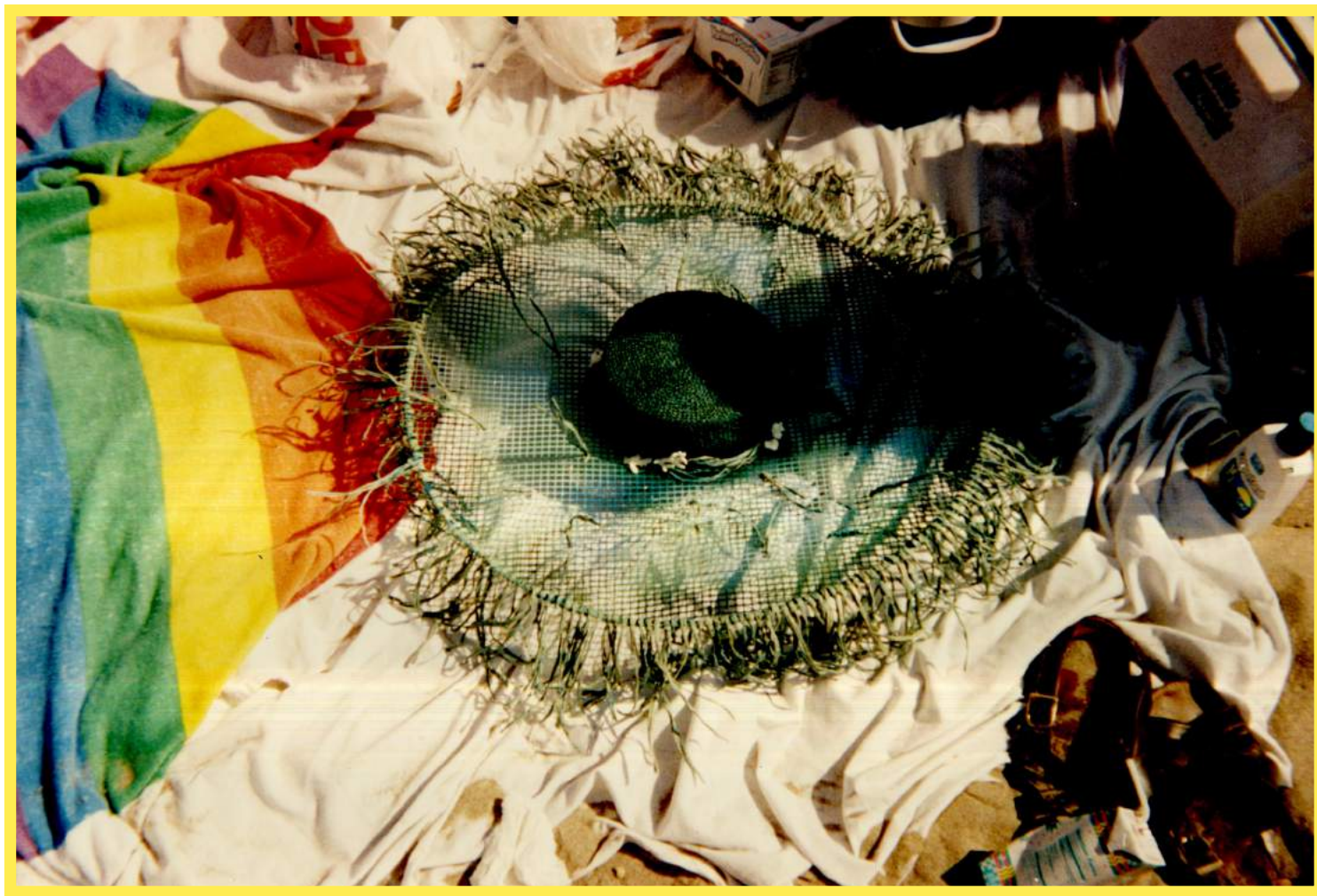
RALPH HOPKINS *with*
GILI RAPPAPORT !!!

with fashions by
Everett Clark
Lonie Cisco
Wa Renee

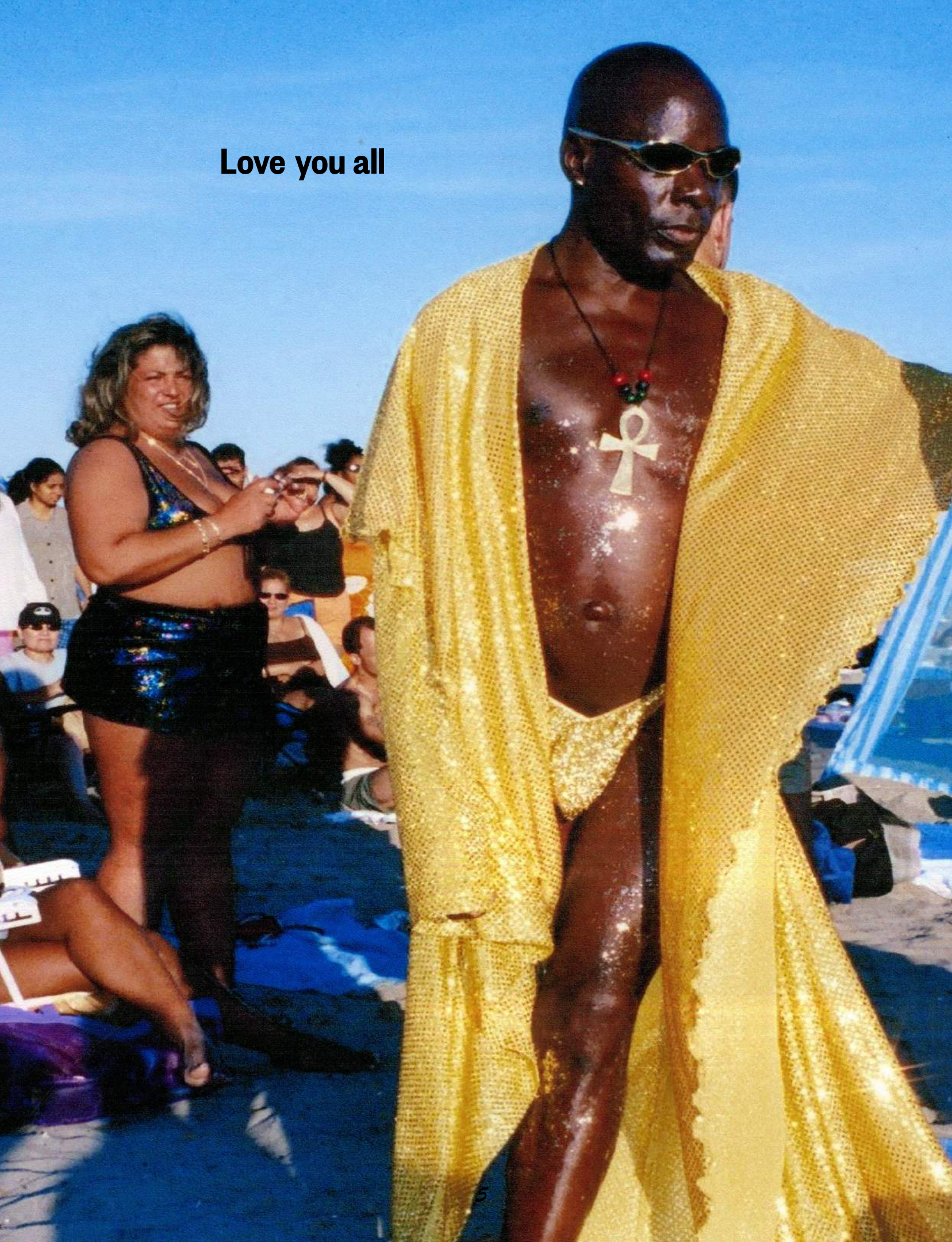
THEY CALL ME THE MAYOR AT RIIS BEACH

Anthology Editions, New York

Thanks to all of the designers and models



who participated in the fashion shows


Love you all

❤ Ralph Hopkins

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I have always loved **boobies. The landscape of New York City and its people-watching stoked the flame of this young love from the beginning. Born in the late 1980s in Greenwich Village, I reached out for boobies at pride parades in Washington Square Park, striking in their fashions of reclamation and collective power, and their joyful and visceral poetics through the streets. A humorous early memory of my mother announcing "We're leaving!!" while I was mid-boobie-reach in diapers contrasted with accepted images of white cis-hetero women that surrounded me in my family and social circles at that time. Since then, I have used art as a tool to search for, challenge, and reimagine meaning as it relates to bodies, especially through movement research and encounters with the natural environment.**

The idea of permission is complex. It is used aspirationally to describe a liberated kind of agency, sometimes at the cost of acknowledging the complex histories of spaces occupied by historically gay and queer and largely BIPOC communities where it is sometimes used. Spaces that faced and continue to face gentrification by White supremacist forces. Just days ago, Black queer dancer O'Shae Sibley was fatally stabbed outside of a New York City gas station on July 29 while vogueing to Beyonce's Renaissance album. Riis Beach, which has been a gay destination for semi-nude swimming and sunbathing since the 1940s, contains multitudes. The act of collecting the photos, flyers, and posters in this book, and redistributing them in a new public way touches on permission and access, particularly since many people in the community and these pages have faced exploitation and displacement from their homes, histories, and identities. Public access has not always meant public access for everyone, since not everyone has always been included in the populace and general public. Words like "queer" and "welcoming" can construct a sense of false consent, as if the communities have invited infiltration by outside forces. I want to be mindful to not frame Riis as existing for the tourists, and remember that communal spaces like Riis Beach came to be because they did not yet exist.

My relationship to the Rockaways began long before I knew Ralph Hopkins or Riis Beach. It began when it was still home to an amusement park (1902–1987), almost 100 years before I ever stepped foot on the Peninsula, when my grandmother

Gilda Selby visited Rockaway Playland. In a photo that I have of her there, I see her huge smile and effortless sense of style: I grew up running my hands along her sparkling bags and long coats. When I moved to the Rockaways, I connected to my roots in the oceanside land, the dunes and the bay. As a queer, nonbinary person, I was graced by invitations to spend time at Riis Beach, and was fortunate to meet Ralph in 2021.

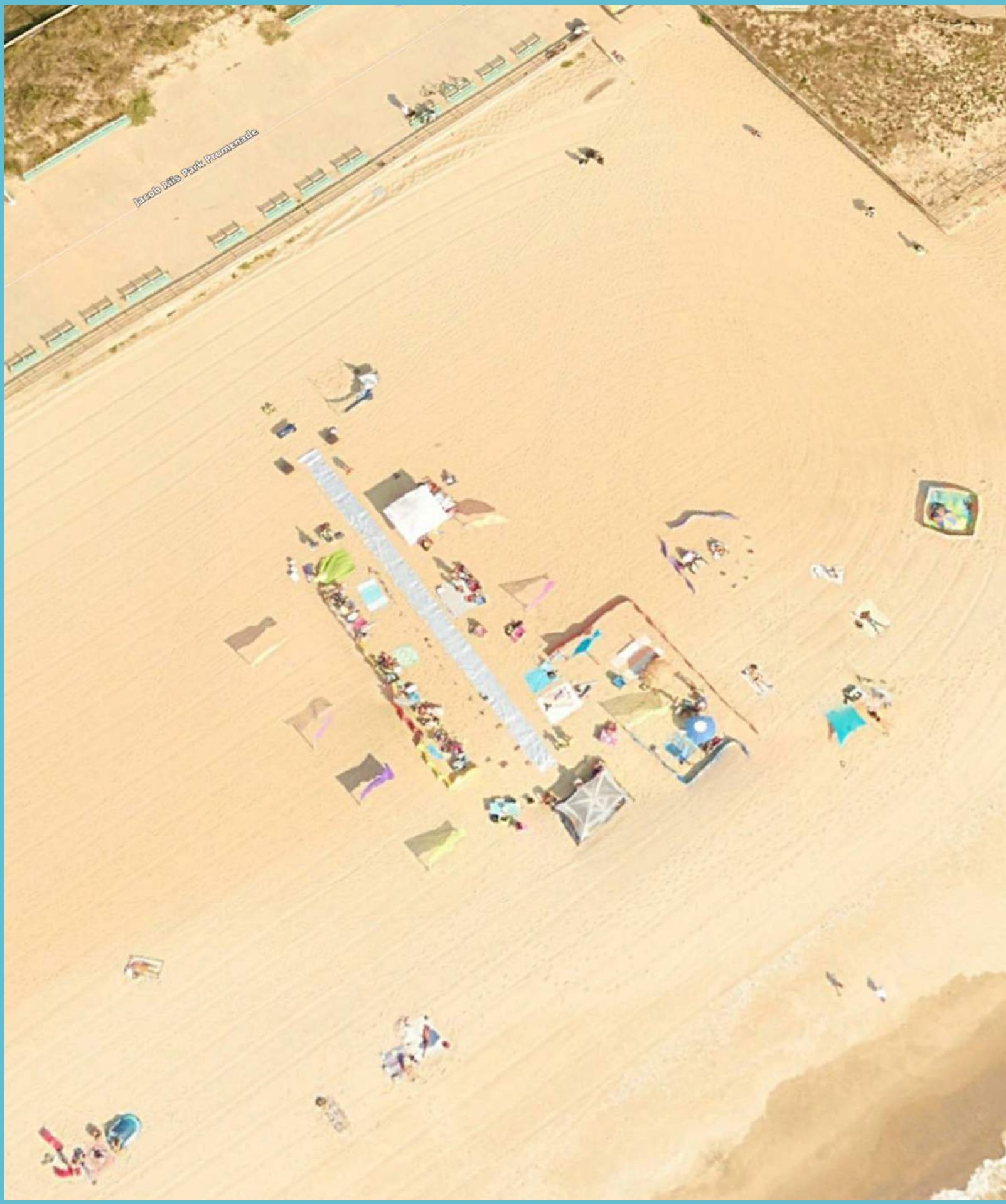
Ralph, who threw his iconic fashion show parties annually on Riis Beach through the 1990s (and has been part of the community there since the 1960s), has never before made his archive available to the public as a book, and it has been the great honor of my life to assist him. ***They Call Me The Mayor at Riis Beach: Ralph's Beach Parties 1994–2000*** surveys his fashion shows as well as the decor elements: a mylar fabric on the sand, and handmade, colorful flags matching the themes of the parties. It also includes archival photos of the beach landscape at Riis, which mark a sense of time. Some photos include the Neponsit hospital building, with its memorial to late queer icon Ms. Colombia, which the city demolished in early 2023. The faces of community members throughout the book reflect Ralph's enduring relationship with the place and the beachgoers. The images truly emerge from the people who made them.

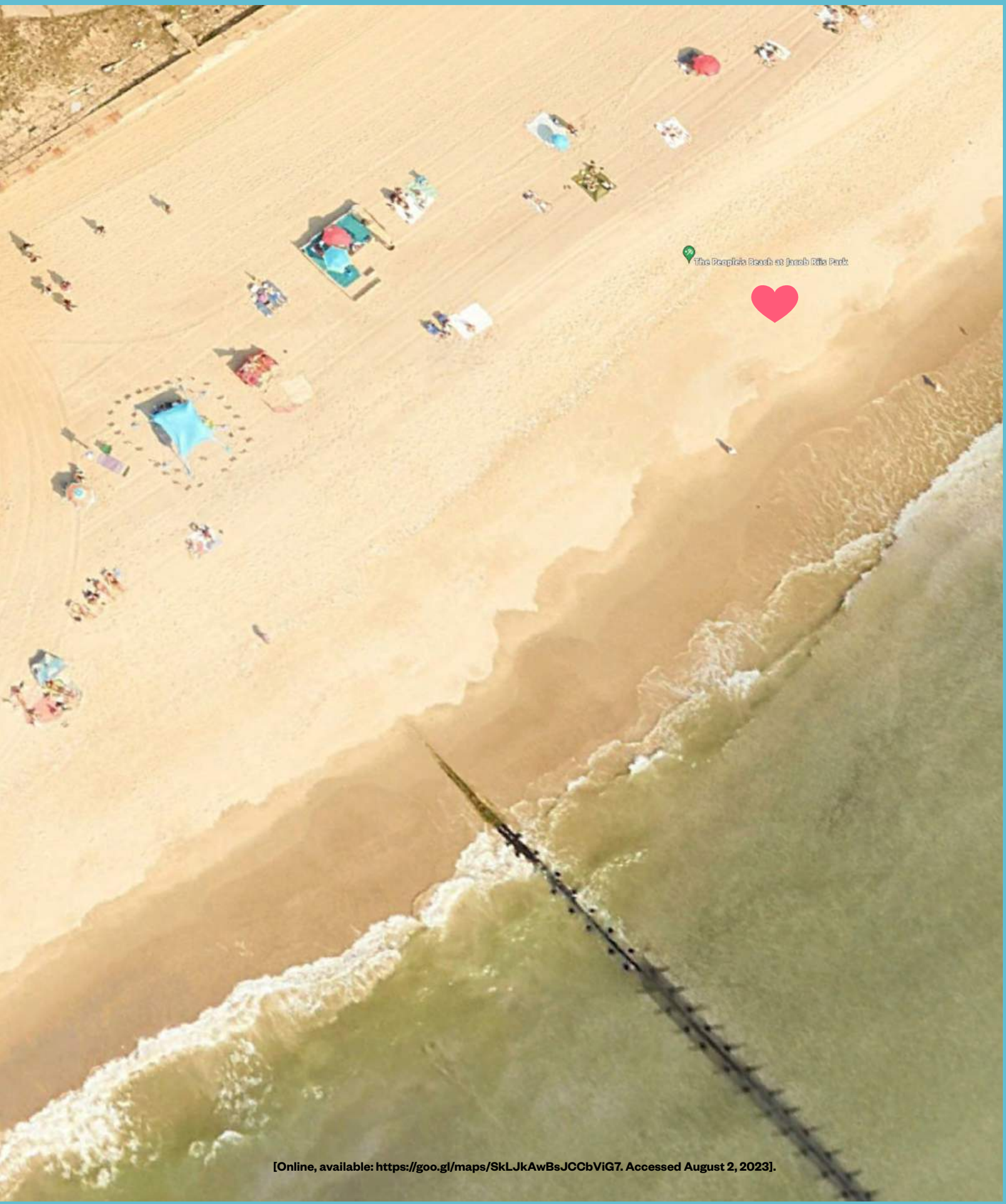
From the beginning, it has been a gift and a pleasure to work with Ralph and his archive. I am grateful for his vital history and unfailing generosity throughout our collaboration and in realizing all aspects of this book. Audre Lorde, who wrote about Riis in her book ***Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*** (1982), once said, "Without community, there is no liberation." It is this spirit of genuine love, liveliness, and uplift of all that oozes from Ralph's words and parties. Deep gratitude goes to Ralph for his inspiring and timeless leadership and vision.

I also want to extend much appreciation for the generosity of all the individuals who joined us for Ralph's Neon Oasis Beach Party, a re-enactment of the fashion show parties that Ralph, Halo Kaya Perez-Gallardo, and I co-organized on the same site at Riis in September 2022 (select attendees are listed on page 88). I am also profoundly grateful to the National Park Service for their generous support, as well as park manager Rita Mullally for her work in acquiring the permit for the beach party in 2022, on the occasion of which we printed the first edition of this book.

Gili Rappaport
Artist + Founder, green flash projects
2024

RALPH'S NEON OASIS BEACH PARTY, 2022. GOOGLE EARTH (2024)





[Online, available: https://goo.gl/maps/SkLJkAwBsJCCbViG7. Accessed August 2, 2023].

Of his first fashion show party, Ralph's White Oasis Beach Party (1994), Ralph Hopkins describes a scene of walking on water and shining like diamonds in the sun. Mylar, his runway fabric, lays a pathway to unseen beauty. Gradually, community members watch more and more captivating performances on this fabric, while basking in the hot sun in the summer sky and wearing beautiful colors, basically half naked, side by side. Feeling relaxed. Ralph Hopkin's beach parties, runway, and flags invite us into this landscape. His work links our eyes to our hearts, our reality to our possibilities, both through their content and through the manner in which it is all presented–through an expanding imagination.

One reason for the visceral reaction to Ralph's work may be the way his art transforms everyday people and ordinary landscape through a sense of wonder. Ralph treats his audience with the intimacy and familiarity of good friends. In his respectful, generous way, he embraces his whole community.
xGR

Part I: Gili interviews Ralph. *SoFA Journal (Social Forms of Art Journal)* published the original interview in their Fall 2021 issue. Brooklyn, New York. November 2, 2021.

Gili Rappaport, Green Flash Projects (they/she)*:* **Will you tell me a little about yourself? Where are you from?**

Ralph Hopkins (he/him): I grew up in Greenwich Village in Manhattan. A lot of my friends don't know, but I went to art schools in Newark [New Jersey]. When I was younger, I thought I was going to be a commercial artist. My mother and I ended up having a little restaurant in Newark.

It was called Bernice's Snack Bar.
I worked there as a cook.

Gili: **Was your family in the restaurant business?**

Ralph: No. Prior to [opening the restaurant] my mother was a beautician, my grandmother was a beautician, and my cousin was a beautician. The beauty parlor was in my grandmother's house [that she owned], on the ground floor. My mother got tired of it, so she decided to open up a restaurant.

Gili: **When did you start throwing parties at Riis Beach?**

Ralph: In about 1994, I was on Riis Beach with my friends, and we were saying maybe we should have a little party. Just as friends, everybody brings a drink, food, or something like that. Everybody comes in white. It would be pretty on the beach. So I thought: Okay, let me get to work. From then on, it was always the third Sunday in August.

Gili: **How about the decorations? Did you do them yourself?**

Ralph: Yes. I liked to make the party look as nice as possible. I knew this area [in Manhattan] where they sell discount toys down the street from Macy's. I went there and I bought two dozen hula hoops. Then I looked up a balloon rental place on the East Side of Manhattan, and I rented balloons with the machine that blows them up.

On the day of the party, I buried the hula hoops halfway in the sand, so only half stuck out. I tied white balloons to each hula hoop so they would float in the air. We brought food, and I cooked a little. My friends bought drinks and food and we put it all out on a little small table. I brought my little boombox, and we had some music. We had a nice time, and everybody said: wow. Other friends saw and wanted to join. They said: next year we've got to do another one, we had so much fun.

The next year was a white party again, only much bigger.

The second party was at least 75 people. Then beach people started to notice. At the beach, they said, "What kind of party is this here?" To make it sound nice, I said, "This is my birthday" so they would be more lenient. We hid drinks in the cooler. A couple of friends started to put my parties on the internet. I said "Oh my god." I was getting a little nervous. I didn't know it would get big like that. So I said, 'I got to up my game with the decorations'.

I had to get into my art mood. I went to the lumber place, and I picked up six ten-foot poles. They could barely get in my living room. I went to the fabric store and got yards of fabric. It was only a dollar a yard at that time. I had fabric from the top of the poles all the way down into the sand. I also had ribbon that I got at this warehouse, where a friend of mine worked, luckily. Everything was falling into place. As I walked into the warehouse, I felt like I was walking into a wonderland. All these treasures, everything was in this place. He said, 'Go take what you need, what do you want?' It was donated stuff.

That's where I found my runway. It was a mylar fabric that coiled. It looked like walking on water. I still have the runway. I found this glitter ribbon, which shined like diamonds in the sun, like real diamonds. You could see it from across the bridge coming to the beach, that's how they shine. So I added those to the top of the poles as decorations. Then I had to rent some tents. For the first party, we made our own tents. Through the years, it got bigger and bigger.

I had to get three more tents—real tents—for the models to change. And I had to get a permit, because I had a DJ and I had a generator.

Gili: **So the parties happened once each summer?**

Ralph: Always the third Sunday in August.

Gili: **Did you have a name for them?**

Ralph: Ralph's Beach Party. Every time I got the permit, they said I had to give a company name. I can't remember what I said at the time, so they started using my name, Ralph Hopkins. I paid them $50 for a permit to have these big tents on Riis. Luckily, I was friendly with the guy who was the head of the permits so he said, "Okay, Ralph." Every other year.

Gili: **Did you feel any fears when making these parties?**

Ralph: The main thing that made me nervous was the weather — I couldn't

cancel the party and reschedule if it rained because I was working! And the food was already cooked, and I couldn't do that again. Luckily it never rained at any of my parties!

Gili: **Where did the clothes come from?**

Ralph: I found friends of mine who were students at FIT [Fashion Institute of Technology]. I said, "Would you like to be one of my models?" And they said, "Fine, sure." One friend of mine worked at FIT, and he said, "I can get more models for you if you need," and he'd bring me the clothes. I said "You never know if somebody will buy your things, you never know who's in the crowd."

So they donated their time and knew other students that had their own clothing lines, so they donated their time too. I had four or five designers. Through the years, it got bigger and bigger. The main designer was my friend Everett Clarke. Others were friends of his, students at FIT. They would design outfits that you had never seen before.

Another designer was named Wa Renee. That was the name everyone knew him as. He died years ago. Like a male Grace Jones. Very out there, very futuristic clothes he used to wear. Very famous in the community.

Gili: **Would you say it was mostly the same community who was hanging out at Riis Beach at that time? Or was it other people from the city who were coming there?**

Ralph: People would come out to Riis, every week, every day of the week. After the word got out on the internet, they were coming from DC, upstate New York, and other places that are outside of New York. And the Bronx. People were bringing me gifts because they thought it was my birthday party! They were coming up to me and saying, "Oh, happy birthday Ralph, happy birthday." I said, "It's not my birthday, my birthday is in May." Memorial Day, May 30th. But I'd say, "Okay, nobody can say I can't have my birthday party months later. So this is my birthday party." I never even met these people that would bring me really nice gifts! Bracelets, vases—which I still have. And some gave me some money, which shocked me.

Gili: **Because they wanted to thank you for throwing the party?**

Ralph: They would say, "Thank you so much." Even up to this day they say, "You know, I met my girlfriend, I met my boyfriend at your party." "Your parties were so good, I had so much fun." Everybody was nice. I never had any fights.

Gili: **Will you describe a typical party day?**

Ralph: My DJ would come, the show started at three o'clock. Sometimes he would come a little late.

He started playing as we were putting down the runway. The models were in the tents getting ready. I was getting ready too, because I opened. At the first parties I would close the fashion show too, with a show.

Gili: **What was your show? Were you dancing, or walking?**

Ralph: I walked. I did "Goldfinger" by Shirley Bassey. She's one of my favorite singers and I'm a James Bond fanatic, and I love *Goldfinger*. So I came out in all gold. Complete sequin gold bikini, with my body in gold dust all over me, a gold mask.

I had six guys that I wrapped in gold mesh.

They came out before me like as the music started. And they would have in the fist

of their hands, gold dust, which I still have some of that. And I told them, "Hold it in your fist to the very end. You will spray the gold dust all over everybody in the crowd." I came out in the middle of them and touched each one of my dancers while the music played "Goldfinger", because I'm Goldfinger.

Another time, I came out as a pimp. And that was to the music "Money, money, money." It was a coat with a long train. And I had a pimp hat on, and a fist full of fake money and real money. I threw the money into the crowd, and they were scrambling for the money. It was fun. I had six other dancers in that one. They came out before me and I wrapped them in green mesh. Connected to the mesh was dollar bills all over the body. They went out and I told them to face the crowd. They handed out fake money to the people in the crowd until I came out.

Gili: **Why did you throw the party at the end of the summer instead of the beginning?**

Ralph: At the end of the summer everybody has their deepest tans. So their bodies look really pretty. So I said, "Everybody come in white." White balloons and everything.

When they said "Do you want to have another one?" I said, "Okay, one more, we've got to change the color." That's why we moved to red, blue, and neon.

Gili: **Was it always one color?**

Ralph: That was the thing—I called it the color code. If the color code was blue, it was shades of blue. And we had another that was called Circus by the Sea. I told my friend, "I need a ringmaster's hat," and he knew how to make the hat. He also made a big ringmaster's red coat. He made it in my hallway because it's so big with a long train.

At a fashion show you want to see really exotic, beautiful things that you've never seen before. I wanted you to know that I knew you were coming. I wanted something for you to see that you hadn't seen before. And to have a good time, and feel that you're part of it.

Gili: **Why is that important to you?**

Ralph: It makes people want to come back for more—they want to see more. See something you have never seen before. You know? I've always liked dressing up, even when I was small. I love fashion. People who know me now, the clothes that I wear, you don't see that with regular guys. The way I put it together. I don't do it to show off. This is me, that's just how I am. I like different things. People see me and ask me how old I am. No one can ever believe I'm 73.

Gili: **Did you realize that we are both wearing fleece today?**

Ralph: Oh! I didn't even notice that we matched.

Gili: **It seems like you were born with a sort of innately radiant sense of style. What's your philosophy on personal style?**

Ralph: When I sit on the beach, people walk up to me, and they notice my necklaces and my stones. I get a lot of compliments. I wear it because it makes me feel good and has good energy. I've been doing this for many years with stones. People know me for my stones.

Gili: **What is your setup like at the beach on a regular day?**

Ralph: I only have my king-sized white sheets. I'm the only one. Been doing it for years.

Gili: **The beauty of a simple white sheet.**

Ralph: I feel confined in a chair. I like to stretch out, and I can have guests come. I have room, I have a king size sheet. For my friends I say, "No, sit down. I got room." I've always been like this. I know so many people on the beach. They call me the Mayor at Riis Beach.

Gili: **And where on the beach do you usually sit?**

Ralph: It's the end of the beach where most of the gays sit. Mixed people sit, which I call the Village. Years ago, they used to be numbered back then. That was bay one. Back in the late 1960s. That was mostly African Americans, Latinos, and a few whites.

Through the years it started changing, different people started coming to that area. And you had a mixed group of people who would start coming here. But it has always been nice, no fights.

Gili: **Have you ever felt tension within the communities at Riis?**

Ralph: You know, when I started to experience tension—or even have any conflict—it was mostly when the beach was nude. It was nude twice over the years. The first time it was nude was the mid 1960s. One girl I knew saw a guy had a camera hidden inside of a boombox. She went up to him. She pulled out a knife, she's like, "Give me that film." Everybody was watching. He got nervous and he opened up the boombox and the camera was in there. He had to pull out the film. She took the film and she stretched it out. And everybody started clapping! But now, most people are half nude anyway. You know, g-strings, the girls are topless. Nobody's bothering anybody. For me, it comes down to fun.

Gili: **How does it feel for you now to be there? How does the community at Riis feel now—compared with how it felt then in the 1960s?**

Ralph: Well, comparing the beach now with the way it used to be, back then 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s: it was a more up feeling, and more fun. The different outfits, people would just come out with robes on. And girls who had fabulous bikinis that you would see in Bergdorf Goodman or Saks Fifth Avenue. Stuff like that. Some models used to come out there back then. You would catch a famous model sitting in the area. The atmosphere was more fun. On the boardwalk there was more restaurants where you could eat seafood. And game rooms.

You didn't feel threatened with all of it, you could go to the boardwalk, nobody would bother us.

Today, there is a younger crowd coming in to the Village area. They're really nice. They're in their own little groups. It's different. But it's still very nice. Now we are getting a lot of people from Manhattan coming here now from Staten Island and on the ferry boats from Lower Manhattan. The crowd at Riis you don't see at Fire Island or Coney Island. With the kind of clothes and dresses . . . it's just more fun at Riis.

Gili: **How do you feel about the abandoned Neponsit Beach Hospital Building [which operated as a tuberculosis sanatorium from 1915 to 1955, was converted into a city-run nursing home, closed in 1998, and was demolished in time for Memorial Day 2023]?**[1]

Ralph: I recently had a girl tell me that that they're going to make that building, I call it The Big House, a hotel. Personally, I think it could make the beach look nicer. Hopefully

it could bring Riis back to where it could be: more glamorous, more fun, fix up the roads [and] the boardwalk. I don't think it will necessarily make us move the Village area. How could they do that? Well, it's public, but it's a federal beach. They have their own rules.

Gili: **That's an interesting perspective. Some organizers I know believe it could displace the Village area.[2]**

Ralph: I don't think so.

Gili: **What made the shows feel so different than what you would see in an average fashion show?**

Ralph: Many people didn't realize where I come from, my background in design and fashion.

I knew exactly how I wanted the tents, what direction I wanted the speakers to angle so the sound goes over the water (and not down the beach to bother anybody), and where to put the tables for the food, how the poles are lined up so everybody can sit along the runway. My designers made outfits you had never seen before. Like something Grace Jones would come out wearing.

Gili: **How about the nature at Riis—the ocean, the sun, the dunes, the waves of the Atlantic, the rose bushes, and even the dolphins swimming?**

Ralph: Having this kind of fashion show on the beach made it a little more exotic. The audience felt relaxed in the hot sun; being basically half naked, with no clothes on watching the show. Seeing the people come with beautiful colors—in all red against the white sand, or all blue. The outfits everybody would come in. All because I would say the color of that year. I said let's have a neon party. Could you imagine the neon colors that came on that beach? Over 200 people in neon colors, and overhead neon fabric comes from ten foot poles. That was the most pretty, out of all the parties.

Occasionally we saw dolphins out there, which is very surprising. I think the first time I started seeing dolphins out there was the early 1970s. We saw them jumping, we couldn't believe it in this water. Everything was just so beautiful at the time. Even now, it still has this magic to it.

Gili: **Did you know that jumping is sometimes a way that dolphins communicate with a mate or another pod?**

Ralph: Jumping has this magic to it, it's beautiful!

Gili: **They're pushing off the water and meeting the air on all sides! It's so open and light, and also so present. Right here, and also free completely.**

Will you share about how you have involved your communities in your fashion shows?

Ralph: I would snatch people out of the crowd. If the design needed another model, I would go out of the tent and say, "I need a girl size 10 or whatever size" and I would just grab any person in the crowd that'd like to come in. Because the fashion show was for anybody who wanted to be in it. I'd tell my friends, who want to be models, "Go in the tent, put on the clothes and walk the runway!" So it involved people in the crowd also to make them more part of it. And then, they had more fun.

Gili: **In 2016, Janelle Okwodu's "2016 Was the Year Real People Took Over the Runways" for Vogue cited luminaries like Hood By Air, Eckhaus Latta, and Chromat as pioneering the tactic of placing real**

people on runways. Were there other parties like that going on at Riis, besides yours?

Ralph: After a while that I was having mine, another group of Black guys, who called themselves 'The Black Pride,' started to have a dance party out there. Their party was three weeks before mine. There were four or five of them, and they put a little money together. They had big tents, a dance floor, and a performance later.

They had more connections than I did. But the main thing was that after their party was finished, they would leave garbage and trash—dirty—all over the beach. A real mess. The beach people hired a cleanup crew to clean up their mess, and they tried to present the bill to them. I heard that the Black Pride guys said, "We're not going to pay that."

So the beach people said, "Oh you're not going to pay for it! Okay no more parties for nobody on the beach anymore." So that one messed me up. That's why my parties stopped. And I had nothing to do with them. I didn't even know them. So that's why I haven't had more parties.

Gili: **Would you like to throw another party?**

Ralph: Now I probably could get a permit. Even now a lot of people still don't know where Riis Beach is. In Manhattan, they ask, "What beach do you go to?" I say, "Riis." They say "So where is that?" I'm not surprised that people still don't know. It is kind of nice, because it kind of makes it a more private beach for us. I've been a beach person all my life. Riis Beach, from day one, I loved it right away... I used to go every weekend by train or by bus. It was just you felt more at ease at Riis. It fits my personality, I would say. It's more fun.

Part II: Gili calls Ralph over the phone. Four months since the two, along with Halo Kaya Perez-Gallardo, co-organized 'Ralph's Neon Oasis Beach Party' on the same site at Riis Beach, Queens, New York. January 16, 2023.

Ralph: **I wish I had remembered for us to all walk the runway together—you, me and Halo.**

Gili: I didn't expect to walk the runway. I'm glad to have just gotten the chance to be there and see you walk. What did it feel like for you?

Ralph: When I'm on stage, I see you but I don't see you. I look at the crowd, my mind is on the music and my body is on what I've got to do next. I'm in my own little bubble.

Gili: What were your favorite parts of the party?

Ralph: I loved seeing you dancing with Joyce. I was so happy that you were having such a good time.

Gili: **It was the experience of a lifetime.**

Ralph: You were part of it. It really is a part of history at Riis Beach.

Gili: **Why do you think that's important to throw these beach parties?**

Ralph: This has never been done—a fashion show on Riis Beach. Something for not just the gays but for all the people. It gives them something to do, something to be a part of. It's fun for everybody. When we look back years from now, they'll say, "remember that party and the beach, the fashions and the fun people." Somebody has to finally come up, years ago and even now, to bring fun to the beach and to the people. Even the straight people, give them something to see! Something they hadn't

seen before, especially at the beach. That person is me. I didn't plan it that way, maybe I was chosen. And everything seemed to turn out for the good.

Gili: **How was it to co-organize with Halo and me?**

Ralph: You were also chosen inadvertently, to fall into it also. You have a sense of style, you know about your colors and decorations. Everyone can't do what we do. That kind of talent. It's funny how things come about. You connected to me, and then you knew Halo, and things just fell into place. We did it. I'm still pinching myself. I really had another party, at my age. I had given up on the beach. I even sold a lot of things, my tents.

Gili: **How did it feel to be on the beach that day in September? I know it happened a few weeks later than August, when you usually held the parties.**

Ralph: I loved not feeling enclosed, since it's outside.

Gili: **How does Riis Beach feel different than the 1990s?**

Ralph: Years ago, it was more gays. More gays with talent! People that we didn't know came, from across the beach, just to see what we were doing, and loved what they were seeing. I saw a lot of cameras. Smiling, clapping, having a good time. And it's safe. There's no drama.

Gili: **What do you think about the building coming down?**

Ralph: The property belongs to Neponsit. The building has nothing to do with Riis. Riis Beach is federal property. They can't make anyone on the gay side move. They have no say on that. The only thing is that it'll be open, and they're just going to build whatever they're going to build.

Maybe it'll be nice! Finally get a breeze coming through it! (laughs) Always so hot over there.

Gili: **Ralph, when I see you, I feel like I belong.**

Ralph: Are you wearing black slacks? I had a flash of you wearing black slacks. ☀

Notes:

1. Atul Dev, "LGBTQ beach sanctum faces demolition in New York," Reuters, October 12, 2022.

2. James Hannaham with Melissa Guerrero, Jeffrey Furticella, Tanner Curtis, Rebecca Lieberman, and Yael Malka, "Will Demolition Ruin 'The People's Beach'?" *The New York Times*, September 15, 2022.

1994 - RALPH'S WHITE OASIS BEACH PARTY

RALPH'S WHITE OASIS BEACH PARTY

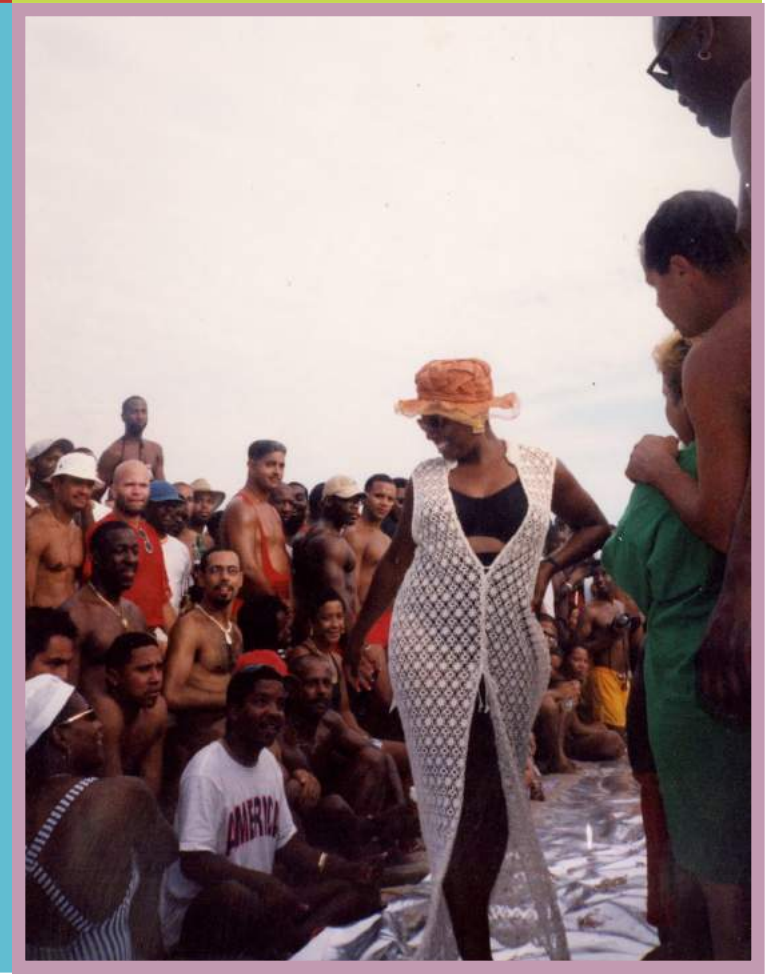
PLACE: RIIS PARK
DATE: AUGUST 21, 1994
TIME: 10 A.M. UNTIL...
P.S. *YES, IT'S MY BIRTHDAY PARTY !!!*

RAIN DATE: AUG. 28, 1994

“FEEDING THE GUESTS FOR THE WHITE PARTY!”

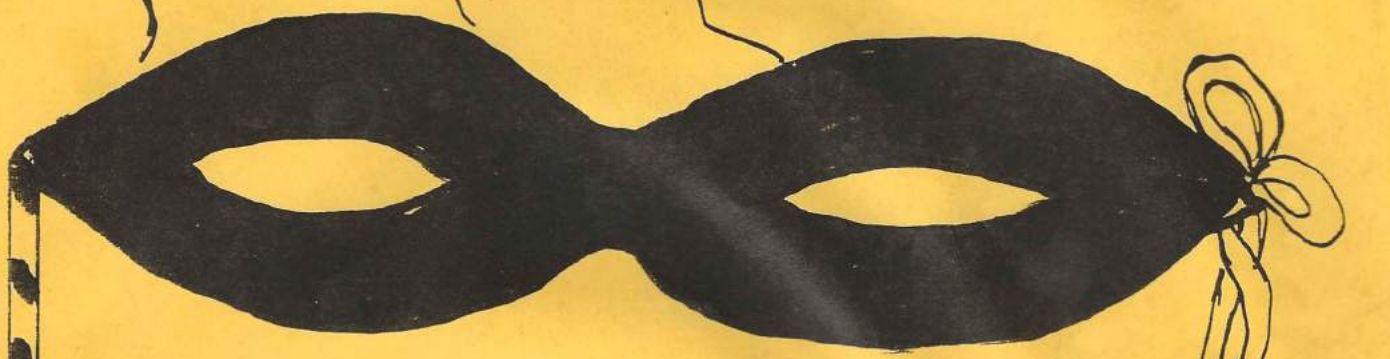
1994 - RALPH'S WHITE OASIS BEACH PARTY

“WA RENEE AND MICHAEL, TABLE SETUP BY BYRON BARN, ROBERT AND GIOVANNI WITH A CARD FOR RALPH”



1996 - RALPH'S CARNIVAL AT RIIS BEACH PARTY

RALPH'S CARNIVAL AT RIIS BEACH PARTY



DATE: AUGUST 18, 96

PLACE: RIIS PARK

TIME: 10 AM UNTIL

COLORS: "NEONS"

P.S. YES IT'S MY BIRTHDAY PARTY!!!

“GUESTS ENJOYING THE SHOW!”

1996 - RALPH'S CARNIVAL AT RIIS BEACH PARTY

1996 - RALPH'S CARNIVAL AT RIIS BEACH PARTY

NAYA
NAYA
NAYA

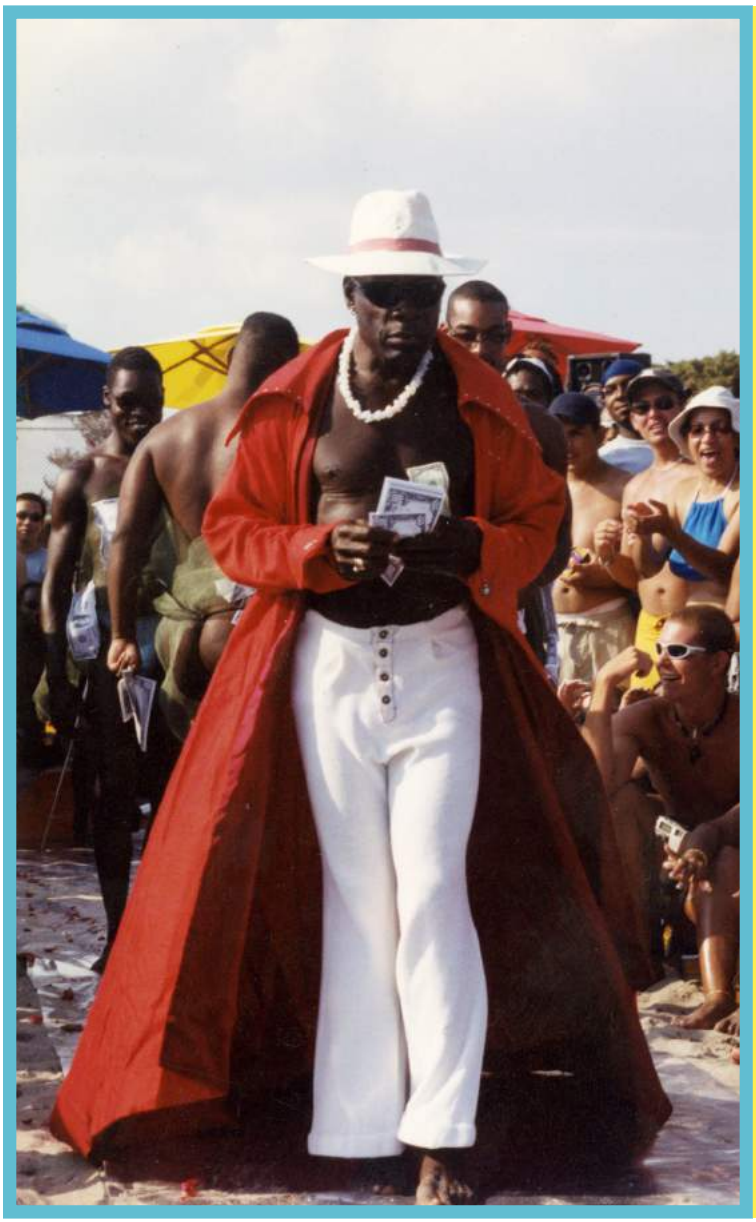
8 18 96

1996 - RALPH'S CARNIVAL AT RIIS BEACH PARTY

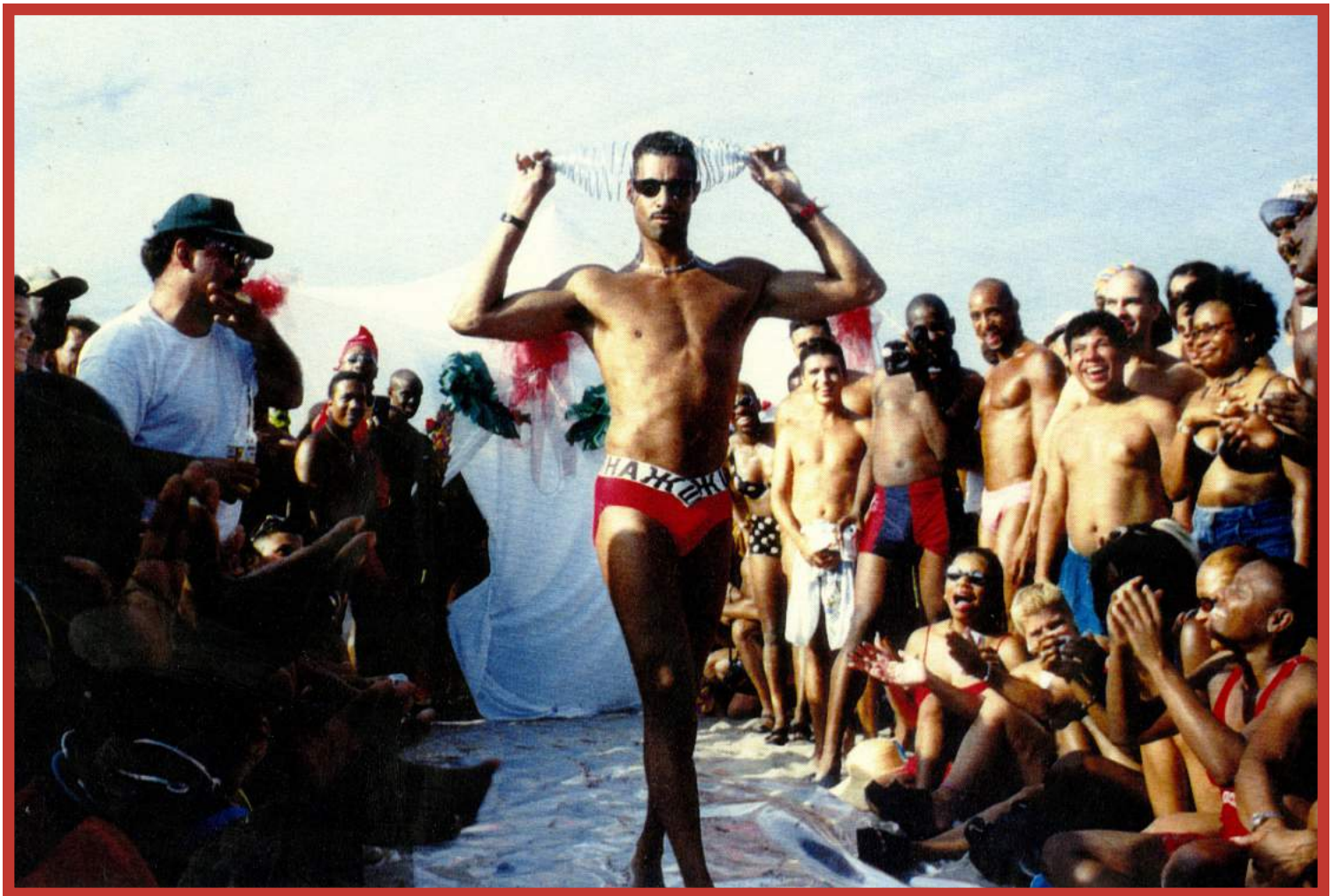
1997 - RALPH'S RED HOT BEACH PARTY

RALPH'S RED HOT BEACH PARTY IS COMING!

- **WHERE?**
- AT RISS BEACH
- **WHEN?**
- AUGUST 17, 1997
- **TIME**: 10:00 UNTIL ...
- SHOW TIME: 3:00 p.m.
- ***DRESS CODE?***
- **ALL IN RED**
- **FOOD:**
- **FAVORITE DISH, LIQUOR**
- **DESSERT, ETC. APPRECIATED.**
- **p.s.: Yes it is my birthday**



1997 - RALPH'S RED HOT BEACH PARTY



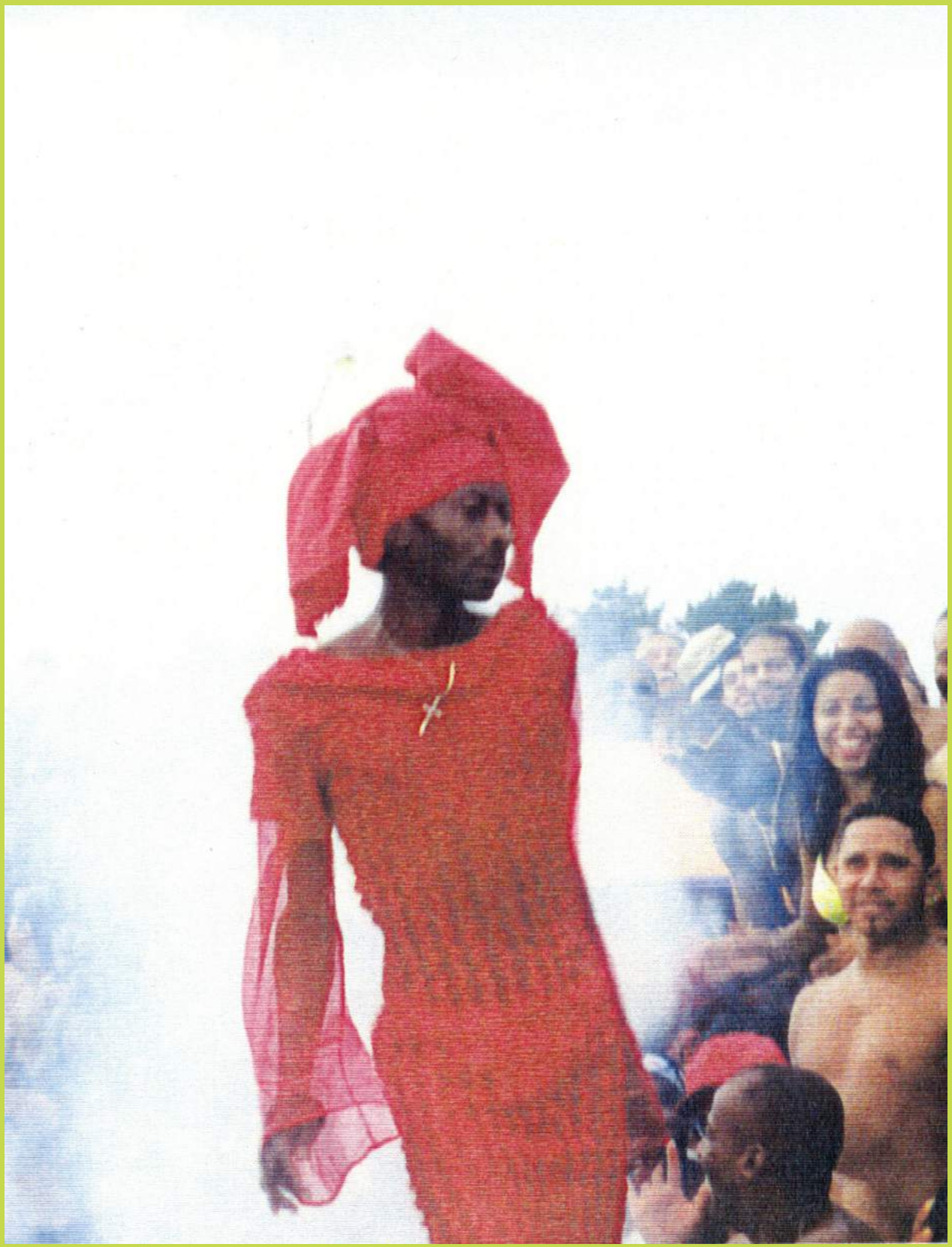
“MODELS GETTING READY”

1997 - RALPH'S RED HOT BEACH PARTY

“RALPH SETTING UP, PUTTING POTPOURRI ON THE RUNWAY”

“MONA, LONIE CISCO, AND CISCO'S SISTER”

1997 - RALPH'S RED HOT BEACH PARTY



1997 - RALPH'S RED HOT BEACH PARTY

NAYA
NAYA

1998 - RALPH'S BLUE ICE BEACH PARTY

ROBE BY LONIE CISCO, BODYSUITS BY EVERETT CLARK

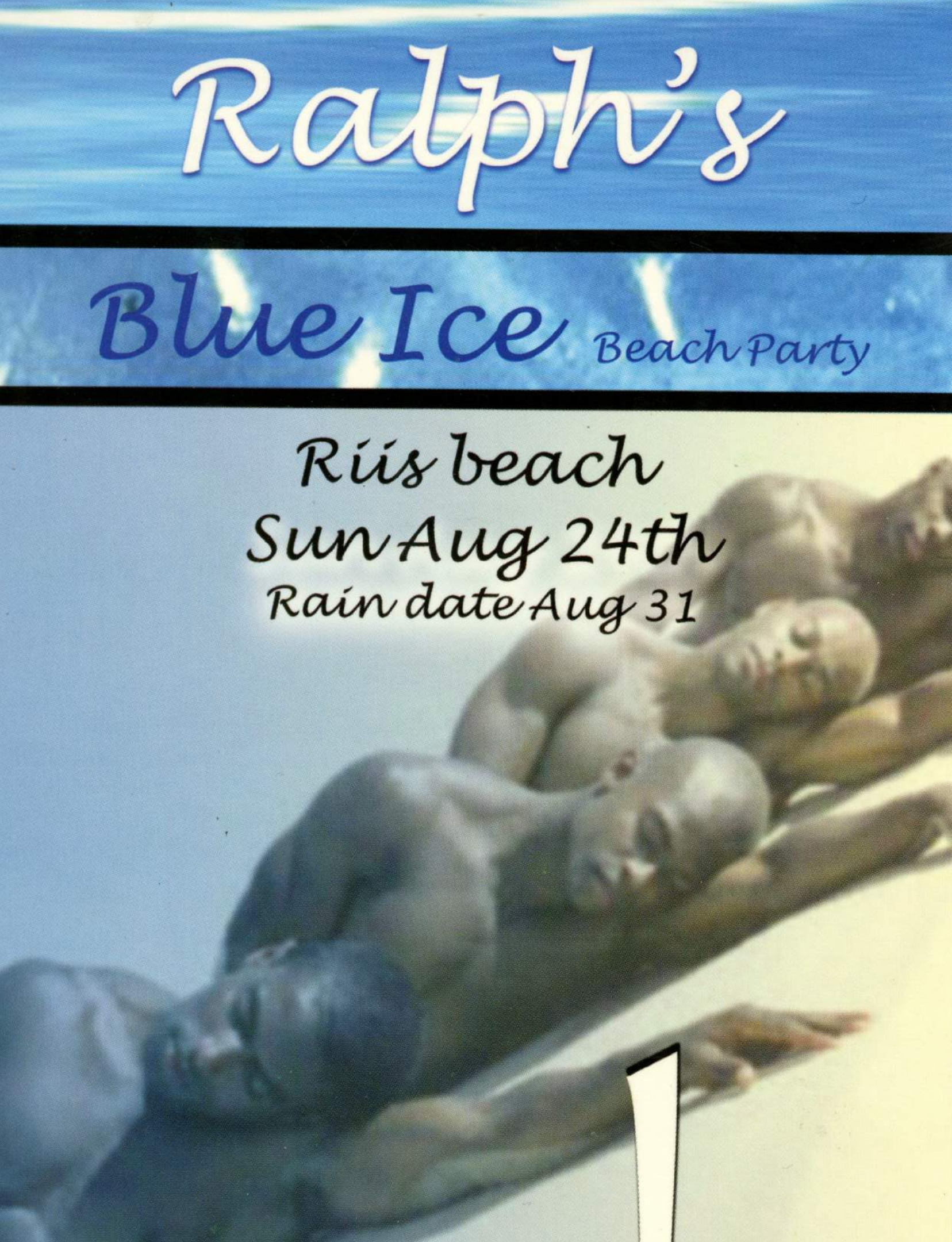
Ralph's

Blue Ice Beach Party

Riis beach

Sun Aug 24th

Rain date Aug 31



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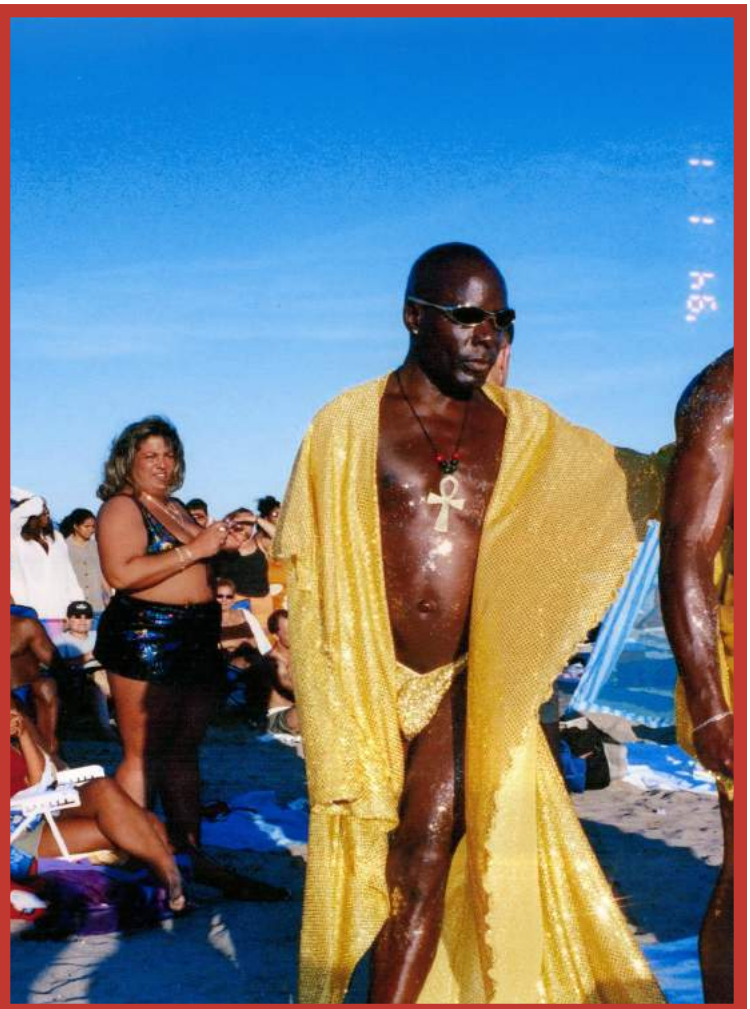
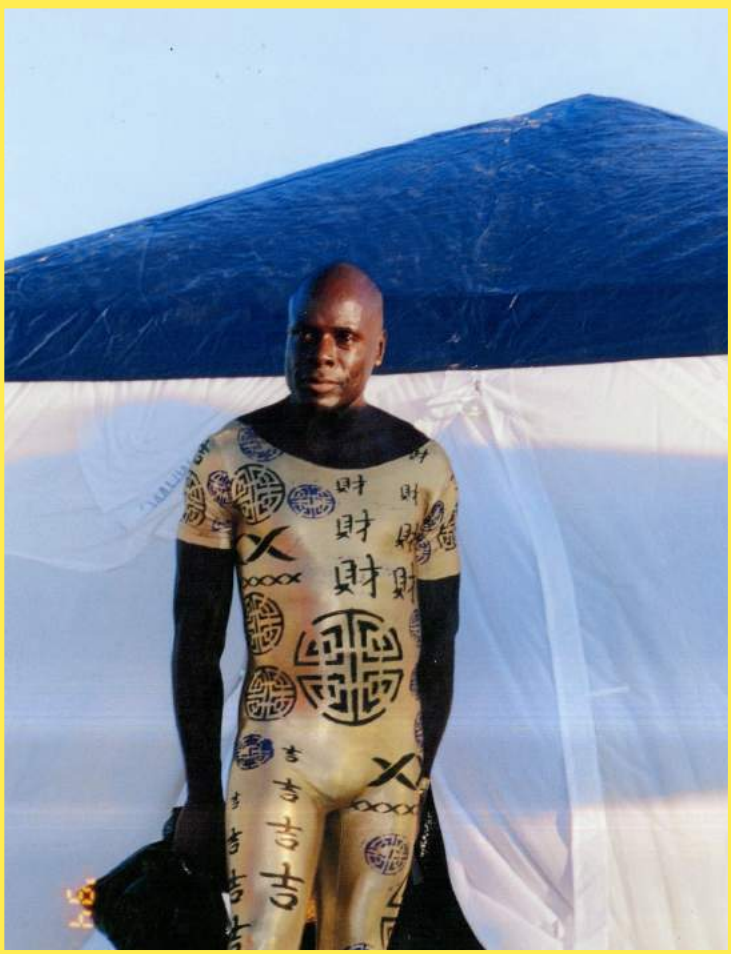
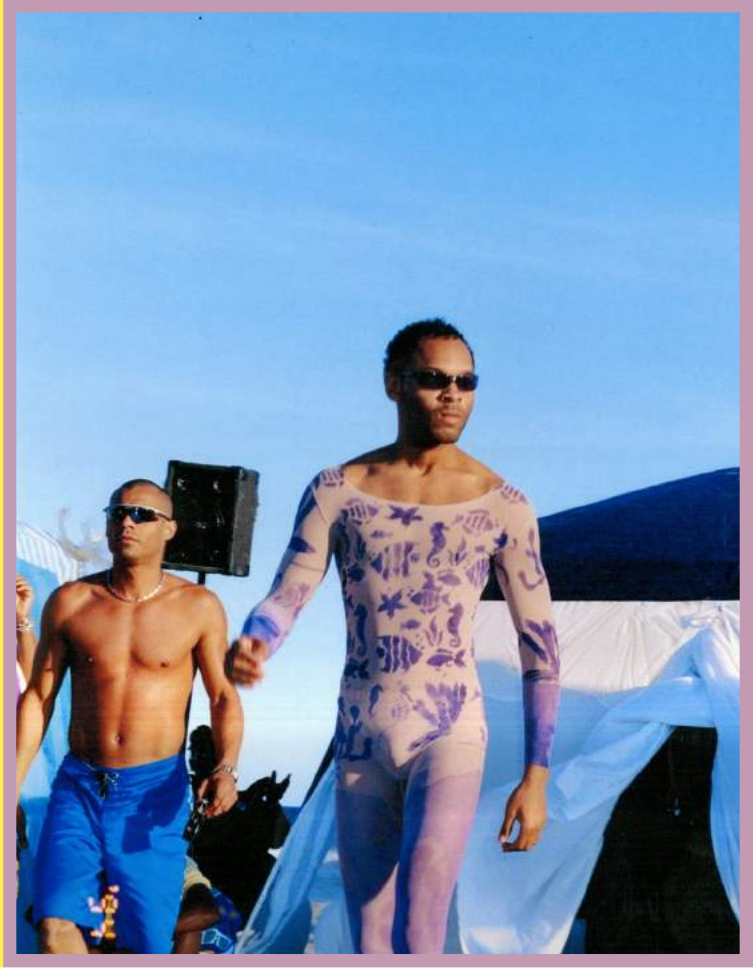
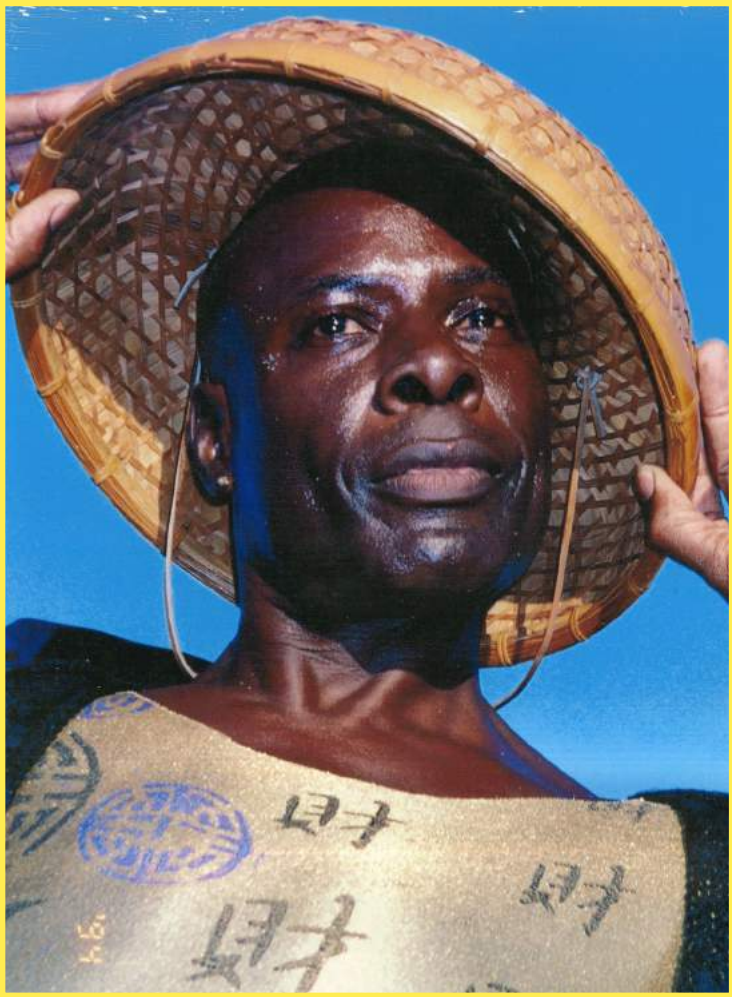
1998 - RALPH'S BLUE ICE BEACH PARTY







ROBE BY LONIE CISCO, BODYSUITS BY EVERETT CLARK



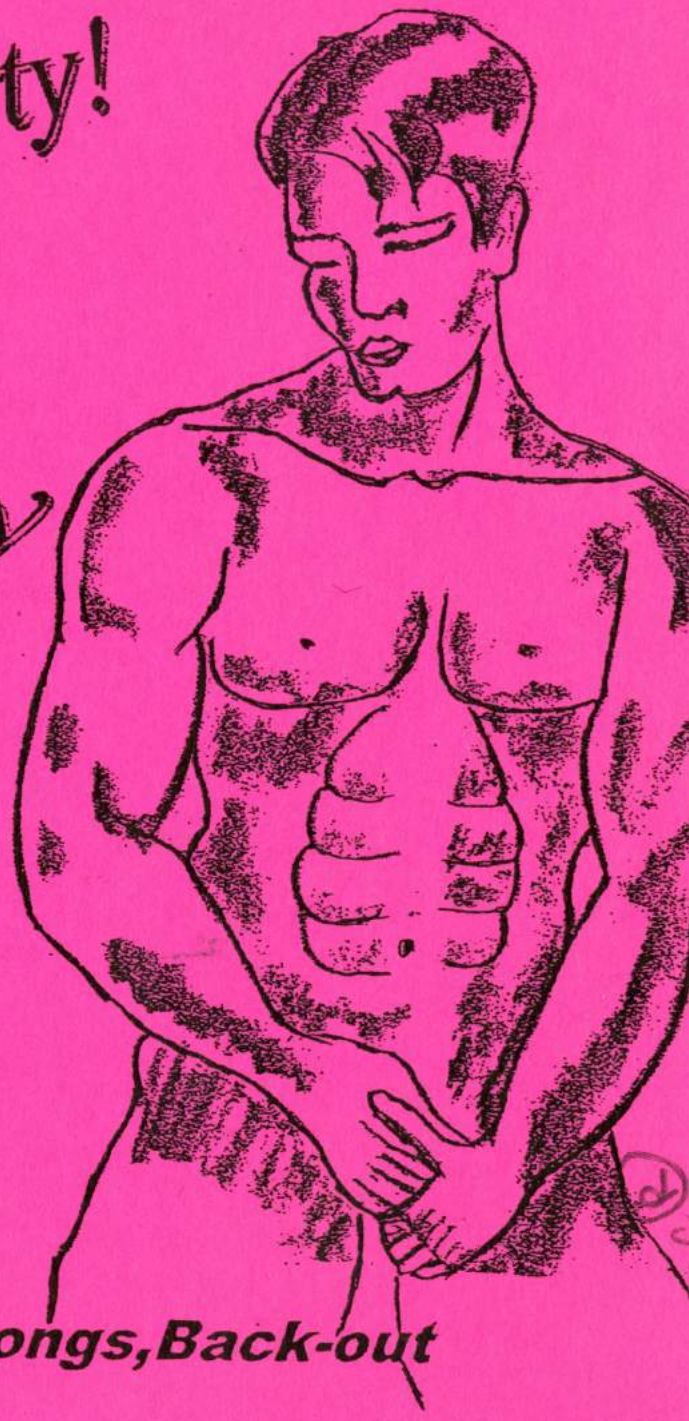
1998 - RALPH'S BLUE ICE BEACH PARTY

Ralph's

It's my Birthday Party!

Bare as you dare!!!

Beach Party



Where: Riis Beach

When? August 13,2000

Time? 10:00 am until.....

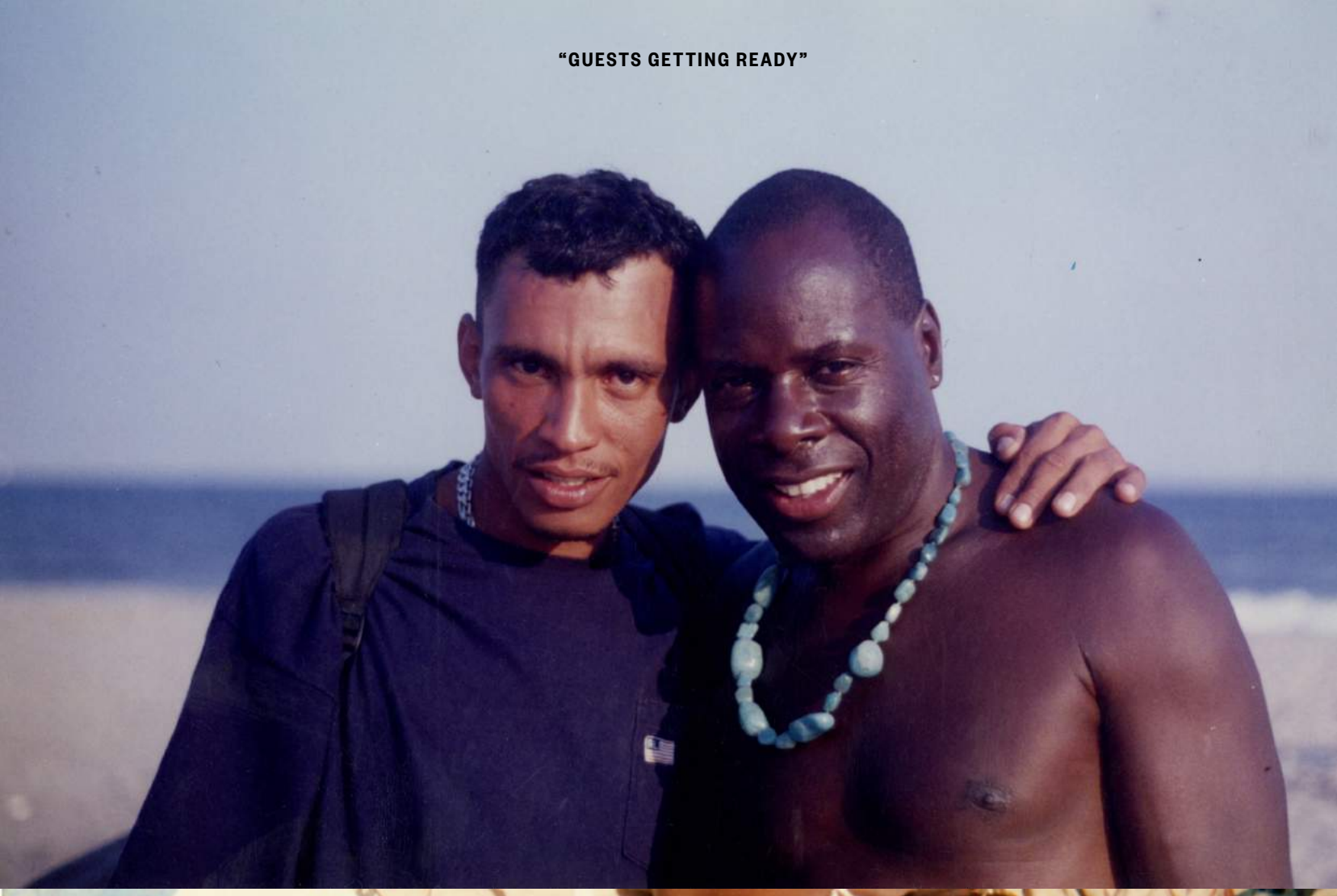
Show Time: 3:00pm

Dress Code: See through, thongs,Back-out
G-strings or whatever!

Food: your favorite dish or drink would be appreciated

PS: no video or pictures without permission of Ralph

“GUESTS GETTING READY”



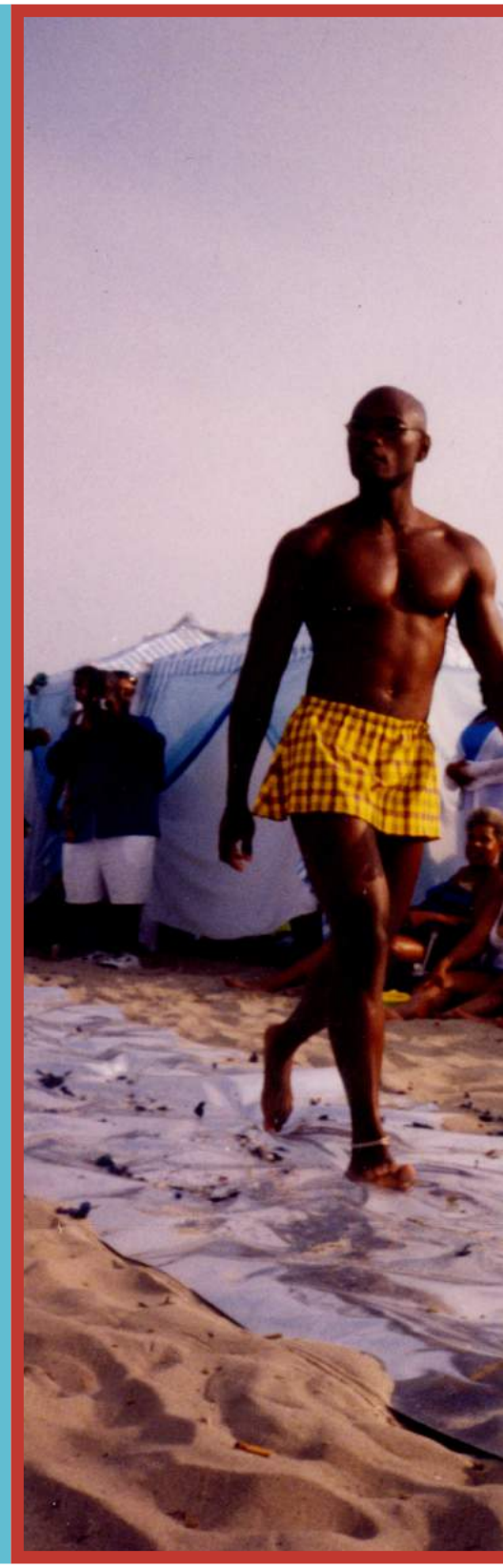
NAYA
NAYA

NAYA
NAYA
NAYA

2000 - RALPH'S BARE AS YOU DARE BEACH PARTY

2000 - RALPH'S BARE AS YOU DARE BEACH PARTY

2000 - RALPH'S BARE AS YOU DARE BEACH PARTY

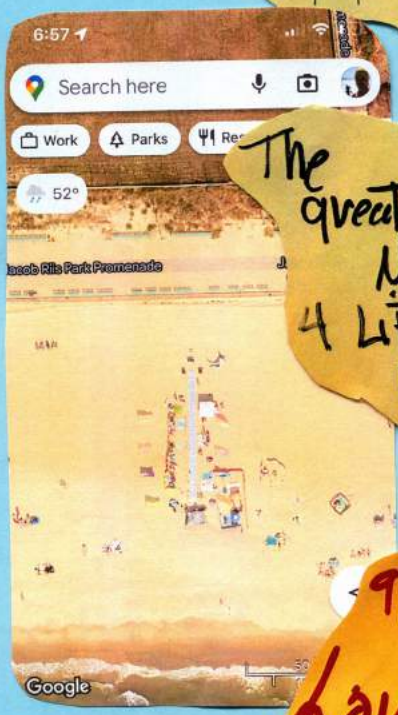


2000 - RALPH'S BARE AS YOU DARE BEACH PARTY

Thanks for all your love Ralph's Rico

Thank you for all your parties!! We love you xo Summa Peoples beach 2022 You Rock Tina xoxo

Life is a Party always with you! BE-you-TIFUL! Love IRA & TEE 2022



The greatest Memories 4 LIFE Natalie xoxo + Dianne 2022

2022 Just Keep on Keeping On by GOD's Grace Love Ralph Always "DJ" Renee

9/18/22 Love You! Continued Blessings Patricia

2022 Ralph - I finally attended your event !!! Love you to the moon and back - Joyce

PREVIOUS: RALPH'S NEON OASIS BEACH PARTY, 2022. COLLAGE BY GILI RAPPAPORT. CONTENTS: RALPH'S PHOTOS, THE INVITATION, GUESTBOOK NOTES, AND THE GOOGLE EARTH IMAGE OF RALPH'S NEON OASIS BEACH PARTY.

This book is dedicated to the community at Riis Beach who brought these events to life, and all the people who gather on the beach for the sun, water, and community. Thank you everyone for making my parties beautiful. ❤Ralph Hopkins

Thank you to the following people from the bottom of our hearts for participating:

Alicia Smith, Blondie, Bobby Robles, Carlos Ortiz, Charlie Rosas, Claudia Cintron, Cota, Darren, Daniel, Dave Anderson, Dennis Grela, Desira, Dianne, Dianne Franco, Dominic Murphy, Eric Toodles, Eva Wright, Francesco, Giovanni, Helen Arnold, Henry Gibbons, Ira, Jackie Clay, Jacob Wilcock, Joe Garcia, Jojo Tyler, Joyce, Kathy Mageski, Keith McCullough, Kenny Bear, Keri Weaver, Kevin, Kriis Turgeau, Lance McGowan, Larry, Lawrence Moss, Natalie, Patricia Morrison, Press Canady, Joe Goldbeck, John Forde, Julio Vega, Mark, Nancy Bedard, Nina, Norma Van De Mark, Ramon Frisheda, Renee, Rico, Tanva Galecki, Tee, Terry McMahon, Theo Slite, Tina, Tyrone Speight, Wayne, Yaya, Zauban.

Fashions: Everett Clark, Loni Cisco, Care Instructions (by Anne Gilbert Symons), Baggiana (by Sacha Medjo), and Boiled Wool (by Cynthia Chang).

Models: Ralph Hopkins, Carlos Ortiz, Margo Greb, Anastasia C Warren, Hot Bird Bath, Nifemi Ogunro, Claire Beauchamp, Jasmine Araujo, Mo Romney, Anne Gilbert Symons, Sophia Urftik, Talaya Robinson, Logan Francis.

Performers: Davon Rainey, PVSSYHEAVEN (aka Rose Mori), and Venus Babes (aka Ejike Figueira).

DJ: David Store

Creator: Ralph Hopkins

Co-organizers: Ralph Hopkins, Gilian Rappaport, Halo Kaya Perez-Gallardo

Special thanks to the National Park Service, Rita Mullaly, Cristina Aguayo, Seth Caplan and Alex Cullen.

The following individuals kindly created fashions, posters, and flyers for the parties included in this book:

Fashions: Everett Clark, Lonie Cisco, Wa Renee.

Printing of posters and flyers: Calvin Clark

We would also like to thank the following people for their roles in helping to realize myriad aspects of this book:

Halo Kaya Perez-Gallardo, Lisa Jarrett, Adrian Ruth Williams, Dr. Kiara Hill, Ariana Jacobs, Marti Clemmons, Laura Glazer, Shay Mirk.

Thank you to the Riis Beach community for their ongoing efforts to preserve queer advocacy and history:

GLITS (Gays and Lesbians Living in a Transgender Society) and Ceyenne Doroshow, The Audre Lorde Project, The People's Riisearch Group and Jah Elyse Sayers.

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Front cover, Contents: Ralph's Red Hot Beach Party, 1997

Back cover, Ralph's Thank You Note: Ralph's Blue Ice Beach Party, 1998

Publication design credits:
Ralph Hopkins and Gili Rappaport collaboratively designed this publication. Ralph provided creative direction, and Gili led and executed the graphic design. The colors used throughout the book reference Ralph's Carnival at Riis Beach Party (1996) and his preference for "making the book colorful and eye-catching."

About the co-authors:

Ralph Hopkins (he/him) is a 77-year-old native New Yorker residing in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn. Known as the Mayor at Riis Beach, he threw participatory beach parties there with the community in the 1990s involving fashion shows, DJs, and food. He has been a consistent presence at Riis for the past six decades. Ralph is also a former chef, and in the 1970s, became a five-time gold medalist—and one bronze—at the Madison Square Garden Harvest Moon Ball for the Lindy Hop and Jitterbug. He is also a US Army veteran.

Gili Rappaport (they/she) is a New York-born artist, educator, and naturalist, raised between the Hudson and Delaware Rivers. They earned a BA in American Social-Political Movements from Washington University in St. Louis in 2010, then pursued graphic design. Under apprenticeship with naturalist Laura Chávez Silverman, Rappaport developed profound connections to observation and wilderness, influencing their art practice.
Recipient of an MFA in Contemporary Art Practice: Art + Social Practice at Portland State University School of Art + Design ('24), Rappaport's work garnered recognition in exhibitions such as The Front Room Exhibition Program at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Content 2024 at The Society Hotel, Assembly at King School Museum of Contemporary Art (KSMoCA), The Arlene Schnitzer Prize Exhibition at The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at PSU, and Making Earth Cool at Parallax Gallery, as well as The New York Times and Reuters. Notable publications include *They Call Me The Mayor at Riis Beach: Ralph's Beach Parties 1994—2000* (Anthology Editions), *I See What You See* (KSMoCA), and *The Outside Institute Field Guide to the Northeast Volumes I—III*. KSMoCA and PSU Special Collections and University Archives hold their work in public collections. Rappaport is a nominee for The Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Award by The International Sculpture Center (2024), and recipient of The Michi Kosuge Scholarship in Art (2023). They founded green flash projects (2022), a press centering queer artistry in natural settings. They established they design and research consultancy The Workspace of Gilian Rappaport in 2016. Gili is queer, nonbinary, and of Ashkenazi Jewish descent. They live in New York, New York and Portland, Oregon where they collaborate on site-responsive projects, and research the bonds between making art and stewarding the land. In 2023, they taught their class Movement as Art and Research Practice at School of Art + Design at Portland State University.

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References to internet websites (URLs) were accurate at the time of writing. Neither the authors nor green flash projects are responsible for URLs that may have expired or changed since the manuscript was prepared

green flash projects is a press centering queer artistry in natural places
Manufactured in the United States of America

Published on the occasion of Ralph's Neon Oasis Beach Party (2024)
The People's Beach at Jacob Riis Park, Queens, New York, September 12, 2024
Co-Organizers: Ralph Hopkins, Gilian Rappaport, Halo Kaya Perez-Gallardo

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